

CRITICAL INDIGENOUS THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

May 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community

LOCATIONS

List of Hotels and Conference Spaces:

Campus Tower Suite Hotel
11145 87 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB

Lister Centre- Glacier Room
University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB

Métis Crossing
17339 Victoria Trail, Smoky Lake, AB

Metterra Hotel
10454 82 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB

Ampersand | 27
10612 82 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB

Critical Indigenous Theory in the Study of Religion (CITSR)

Workshop Agenda

May 27-May 30, 2024

Monday: May 27 – Campus Tower

Travel Day

Tuesday: May 28 – Lister Centre (Glacier Room)

8:00-9:00 Breakfast (Lister Centre)

9:00-10:00 Welcome and Introductions:

10:15-10:15 Break

10:15-12:00 Workshop 1: Indigenous Studies

Disciplinarity with Dr. Shalene Wuttunee-Jobin

(Faculty of Native Studies, UofA)

12:00-13:00 Lunch (Lister Centre)

13:00-15:00 Decolonization Walk with Kirsten Lindquist

(PhD Student in Indigenous Studies, Faculty of Native
Studies, UofA)

15:00-17:00 Workshop 2:

Indigenous Knowledges and Place

17:30-19:00 Dinner (Lister Centre)

Free Time

Wednesday: May 29 – Métis Crossing

7:00–9:00 Breakfast on your own

9:00–11:30 Travel to Métis Crossing– pick up at Campus Tower

12:00–13:00 Lunch at Métis Crossing

13:00–14:30 Workshop 3:

Indigenous Nationhood/Peoplehood Relations

15:00–16:30 Cultural Programming (choice)

1. Meet the Métis

2. Visit Buffalo

16:30–17:30 Free Time

17:30–19:00 Supper

19:00–21:00 Métis Stories and Métis Fiddling

Thursday: May 30 – Métis Crossing

7:00–8:30 Breakfast

8:30–10:30 Workshop 4: Religion and Relationality

10:30–12:00 Cultural Programming (choice)

1. Meet the Métis

2. Visit Buffalo

12:00–13:00 Lunch

13:00–15:00 Workshop 5: Sharing Circle Activity
(Debrief/ Next Steps)

16:00–17:30 Return to Edmonton to Metterra Hotel

18:30–20:00 Farewell Dinner at Ampersand | 27

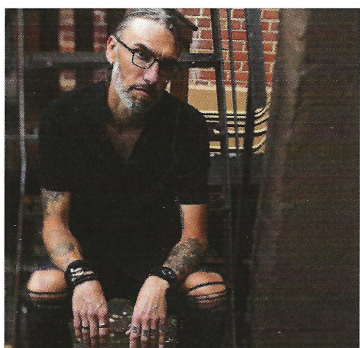


ORGANIZERS



Paul Gareau

Paul Gareau is Métis, born and raised in the Batoche Homeland in Saskatchewan. He is an associate professor and associate dean (graduate studies) in the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. His research and scholarship focus on Métis Studies and Religious Studies; religion and relationality; Indigenous onto-epistemologies; nationhood/peoplehood relations; race, gender, and marginalization; and theatre-based, community-led research.



Joseph Wiebe

Joseph R. Wiebe is Associate Professor of Religion and Ecology in the Augustana Faculty at the University of Alberta and Director of the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life. He is author of *The Place of Imagination: Wendell Berry and The Poetics of Community, Affection, and Identity* (Baylor, 2017). In addition to other essays on Wendell Berry, he has also published on the influence of settler colonialism on religious environmental imagination and eco-theology. He is also co-Chair of the Religion and Ecology Unit of the American Academy of Religion.



David Walsh

Dr. Walsh is a non-Native scholar of Indigenous religious traditions with particular interests in Native American relationships with their environment. David is faculty advisor for the campus club SIA (Students for Indigenous Awareness) and facilitates the campus Land Acknowledgement Committee. Walsh has conducted extensive ethnographic work with the Dene people of subarctic Canada. He is fascinated by Dene relationships with caribou and other food animals, particularly how Dene negotiate these relationships in the era of climate change and greatly reduced caribou populations. David has also worked with many Indigenous Peoples and Nations including the Hopi, Navajo, and Yaqui in Arizona, the Lakota at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, and with Water Protectors at the #NoDAPL movement in Standing Rock, North Dakota.

PARTICIPANTS



Miguel Aguilera

Miguel Astor-Aguilera (PhD Anthropology - University at Albany/SUNY) is an Arizona State University Associate Professor whose scholarship concentrates on religious studies, sociocultural anthropology, ethnography, material culture, and archaeology focusing on Indigenous epistemologies within Latin America. He specializes in Mesoamerican cosmovisions and their historical traditions, that is, pre-Columbian, colonial, and contemporary. His work specializes on Maya ritual specialists in the Yucatán peninsula and their cosmologies as related to their environment. Astor-Aguilera currently teaches courses at Arizona State University in Religious Studies within the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, which are cross-listed with the School of Human Evolution and Social Change (Anthropology) and the School of Transborder Studies (Latin American Studies). He has been Faculty Head (Chair) of Religious Studies, Director of Graduate Studies for Religious Studies, and Associate Director of Graduate Studies for the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies at ASU.



Carlos Colorado

Dr. Carlos D. Colorado earned his Ph.D. in 2009 from McMaster University, Department of Religious Studies, with expertise in the areas of Religion and Politics and Western Religious Thought. His research and teaching attend critically to the place of religion in western modernity, focusing especially on the ways in which religion shapes social, political and ethical life in contemporary secular cultures. His current research focuses on secularism, colonialism, race and the politics of identity. He is an expert on the work of the Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor and is currently finalizing a book manuscript entitled "Recovering Transcendence in a Secular Age: Charles Taylor's Catholic Thought." Dr. Colorado is also in the early stages of a multi-year project entitled "Indigeneity, Race and Mestizo/Metis Identities in Comparative Perspectives."



Stacie Swain

Swain is a doctoral student in the Political Science department at the University of Victoria, specializing in Canadian Politics and working toward a graduate certificate in Indigenous Nationhood. Her research focuses, broadly speaking, on the politics of Indigenous ceremonies, protocols, and symbols within Canadian public spaces and institutions. Her work analyzes the ways categories of religion and spirituality function within Indigenous-Canadian relations, especially in relation to law, sovereignty, jurisdiction, territory, and dissent. Swain's work brings critical and socio-rhetorical Religious Studies approaches into conversation with Settler Colonial and Indigenous Studies scholarship, through a critical discourse analysis methodology.

PARTICIPANTS



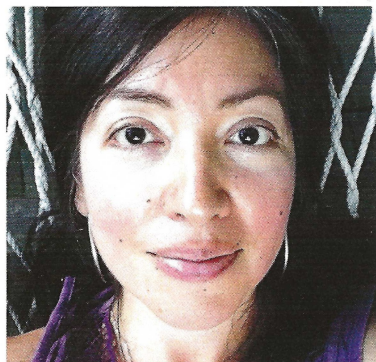
Rebecca Mendoza

Rebecca Mendoza Nunziato (she/ella/ya) is a Xicana MDiv candidate at Harvard Divinity School and an organizer of the Harvard Nahautl Notoquixpoyohuan Language Study Group. She is a graduate of the University of Oregon with professional experience working in community organizing, advocacy, education, and storytelling. Broadly, Rebecca's scholarship centers Indigenous philosophy, material religion, and ritual survivance pertaining to kinship among humans, plants, animals, ancestors, and land in the Abya Yala (the Americas). Her interdisciplinary approach bridges ancient Mesoamerican materials and cosmovision with contemporary Indigenous, Mexican, and Chicana communities. She was a Summer Pre-Columbian Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks and is currently completing her thesis on the topic of copalli (copal), an aromatic tree resin and incense central to rituals and relationships across Mesoamerica.



Meaghan Weatherdon

Dr. Meaghan Weatherdon is an Assistant Professor specializing in Indigenous Religions and Spiritualities of North America in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego. Her research focuses on the act of walking the land as an expression of self-determination within the Journey of Nishiyuu, a social movement in which Cree youth from Whapmagoostui, Québec travelled 1600 km by foot to Ottawa, Ontario during the Winter of Idle No More (2012-2013) to demonstrate strength and solidarity among Indigenous Nations. Her approach to research is informed by Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies and community collaborative engagement. Her research interests include intersections between Indigenous spiritualities, youth self-determination, environmental justice, Indigenous governance, critical geography, and settler colonial studies.



Natalie Avalos

Natalie Avalos is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies and Affiliate Faculty in the Religious Studies and Women and Gender Studies Departments. Dr. Avalos is an ethnographer of religion whose work in comparative Indigeneities explores urban Indigenous and Tibetan refugee religious life, healing historical trauma, and decolonial praxis. She is currently working on her manuscript titled *Decolonizing Metaphysics: Transnational Indigeneities and Religious Refusal*. It argues that the reassertion of land-based logics among Native and Tibetan peoples not only de-centers settler colonial claims to legitimate knowledge but also articulates forms of sovereignty rooted in interdependent relations of power among all persons, human and other-than human. She is a Chicana of Mexican Indigenous descent, born and raised in the Bay Area.

PARTICIPANTS



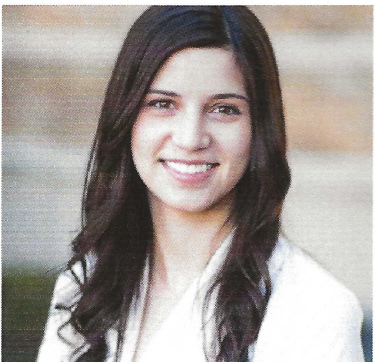
Andrea McComb Sanchez

Dr. Andrea McComb Sanchez (Ph.D. in Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara) specializes in Native American religious traditions, religion in the Southwest, religion and colonialism in the U.S., and religion and the environment. She is a member of the American Indian Studies Graduate Interdisciplinary Program and an affiliate of the Institute of the Environment. McComb Sanchez's current book project (under contract with the University of Nebraska Press), *Of Corn and Catholicism: A History of Religion and Power in Pueblo Indian Patron Saint Feast Days*, focuses on the imposition, adaptation, and eventual appropriation of Catholicism by Pueblo Indians through their development of the Patron Saint Feast Days. It analyzes how these Feast Days are both a relaxation and a maintenance of boundaries between Catholicism and older Pueblo traditions and ceremonies. McComb Sanchez teaches courses on Native American religious traditions, religion and culture in the Southwest, religion and ecology, and theory and method in religious studies.



Yuria Celidwen

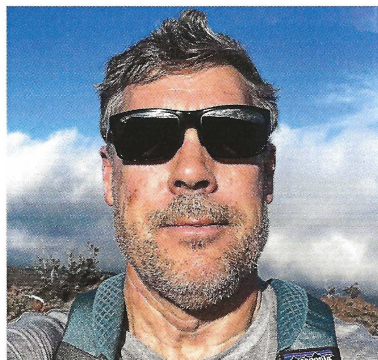
Yuria Celidwen is Indigenous Nahua and Maya descent, born into a family of mystics, healers, poets, and explorers from the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. Her research converges the vibrant threads of Indigenous studies, cultural psychology, and contemplative science. She is interested in transdisciplinary approaches to how the experience of self-transcendence is embodied and enhances prosocial behavior (ethics, compassion, kindness, reverence, and a sense of awe, sacredness, and love) across Indigenous contemplative traditions worldwide. Celidwen teaches Indigenous epistemologies and spirituality and her work pioneered the Indigenous contemplative experience within contemplative studies. In addition, she leads workshops on prosocial practices (such as heartfulness, compassion, kindness, gratitude, etc.) from an Indigenous perspective. She emphasizes cultivating a sense of reverence and ecological belonging, raising awareness of social and environmental justice and community-engaged practices, revitalizing Indigenous languages, traditional medicine, clean energy, and conservation.



Sydney Beckmann

Sydney Beckmann is a Ph.D. Candidate in American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona, currently a Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Fellow. Her interdisciplinary research intersects the areas of religion, race, and colonialism.

PARTICIPANTS



Greg Johnson

Greg Johnson (PhD University of Chicago) is Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he is also director of the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life. He also serves on the UCSB campus Repatriation Review Committee and on the faculty council for American Indian and Indigenous Studies.



Molly Harbour Bassett

Molly Bassett is Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Religious Studies at Georgia State University located in Atlanta on the traditional and unceded lands of the Mvskoke people. She studies Indigenous religious traditions in Mesoamerica and Mexico, with a focus on Mexica and Nahuatl spiritual concepts. Her next book project proposes the *tlaquimilolli* (sacred bundle) as a model for theory and method in the study of Mexica and Nahuatl religions. She has collaborations underway with Abelardo de la Cruz de la Cruz (Religious Studies, UNC) and Jeanette Peterson (History of Art & Architecture, UCSB), and she co-edited *Indigenous Religious Traditions in 5 Minutes* (Equinox 2022) with Natalie Avalos (Ethnic Studies, CU Boulder).

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



Nakita Valerio

Nakita Valerio, based in Treaty 6, Edmonton, is a Vanier Scholar completing doctoral studies in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta, specializing in Muslim women's religious leadership and Qur'anic literacy in Morocco. With a background in Islamic-Jewish Moroccan history, she serves as an academic strategist/mentor to graduate students in the social sciences and humanities and she served as the Research Director at the Institute for Religious and Socio-Political Studies for three years. She is the current Editor of the Religious and Socio-Political Studies Journal. Nakita founded The Nusaibah Collective, a Muslim women's study group, and is engaged in traditional Islamic sciences. She advises the Chester Ronning Center and sponsors the Fatima Al-Fihri Graduate Award in African Islamic Studies. Additionally, she holds various roles within the UAlberta community and she serves on the executive board of Rabata, an international Muslim women's organization. Nakita is also the co-founder of a primary school in rural Morocco.



Cindy Eisman

Cindy Eisman is a member of Cowessess First Nation with Cree, German, and Norwegian heritage. She holds a BA in Philosophy and Religious Studies with a major in Computing Science from Augustana Faculty. After working in the private sector for over a decade, she returned to university to pursue further education. To that end, she is currently in her final year of the Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies Honours degree program. Cindy has been accepted into the Master of Arts in Native Studies program. There, she plans to explore how Indigenous peoples relate to the socio-political and religious discourses on "end times" that dominate settler colonial society.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



Rhonda Ashmore

Rhonda is completing a BA-After Degree focused on History and Native Studies, and through this she has been learning about and re-connecting with Métis identity. Fall 2024, she is transferring into the Faculty of Native Studies, hoping to develop further understanding while considering future graduate studies. She is grateful for the personal growth and awareness over the past 4 years, that she credits to course work with supportive instructors, experiences with land-based courses and ceremony, and through opportunities to connect with relatives. At present she is also contemplating how her background in physiotherapy and massage therapy may be combined with Native Studies in ways which may serve community.

Rhonda enjoys learning about her Métis ancestors from Lac Ste Anne on her mom's side, and about her Irish and Ukrainian ancestors, centered near Mundare Alberta, on her dad's side. Some family names from Lac Ste Anne include Letendre, Belcourt, Gladu, Gray, and L'Hirondelle.



Kylie Calderon

Kylie Calderon is a third-year undergraduate student at the University of Alberta and Muslim revert on Treaty 6 territory in Edmonton. She is working toward completing a Bachelor of Arts Honours in Religious Studies and History. Her honours research will use relationality frameworks to explore the changing relationships between Catholic clergy and Indigenous Mexicans in Chiapas during the Zapatista revolution. Over the last three years, Kylie has created research-based projects using a range of mediums. Her past research has culminated in the production of textile art, audio and visual materials, and traditional research essays in History, Religious Studies and Gender Studies.

In addition to coursework and research at the University of Alberta, Kylie is a board member of the Alberta Public Interest Research Group and sits on the Palestine Solidarity subcommittee. She is an activist and advocate at school and in community in Amiskwaciy Waskahikan. She is a research assistant to Dr Raghad Ebied through the Institute of Religious and Socio-Political Studies.

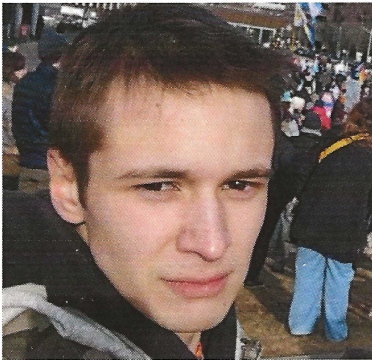
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



Meredith Jevne

Meredith Jevne just wrapped up her Bachelor of Arts degree in Ethics & Global Studies at the University of Alberta. During her undergraduate degree, she completed the Augustana-specific Certificate in Writing Studies and spent a portion of her degree in the Writing Centre, peer tutoring fellow students.

In addition, she has had three wonderful research assistant opportunities, which have changed the way she approaches research and independent study. Currently, she is involved with research in both the Rural Studies department exploring topics related to rural volunteerism, as well as the Religion department exploring topics related to Indigenous studies in the study of religion.



Angus Evarts

Angus Evarts just finished his second year, of his Ethics and Global studies degree, at Augustana. Angus is Métis and is currently working at Métis Crossing. He takes pride in being able to provide important cultural experiences to guests of the centre.

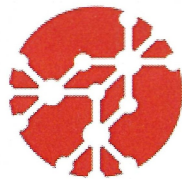
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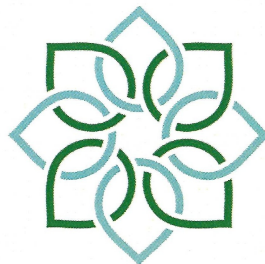
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